Two Principles of Living

JG Bennett: I want to remind you of Beelzebub's distinction between the two principles of living—the foolasnitamnian and the itoklanoz. I have yet to find out how Gurdjieff derived these words, but he always used them. Foolasnitamnian is the right way for a three-brained-being to be. When a man is able to live that way, he is able to fulfill his destiny and he will not leave this world until he has completed the formation of his kesdjan body. We are talking about something which is the aim of our lives. The other way is where one lives by external shocks, particularly by the causes that have arisen in the past. In the way of itoklanoz we are living in the action of our past lives: the bobbinkandelnosts, the wound up springs that keep us moving, simply go on until they are exhausted and then leave nothing behind. Living as a result of causes depends on whether the causes were produced intentionally or not. If not, then there is what Gurdjieff called "living under the law of accident." It is one of the first things from which a man can become free. The essential thing is to put oneself under the laws of the Work or under the laws of some definite purpose to be fulfilled. It is the act of commitment, which by itself changes our relationship to the law of accident.

The itoklanoz way of living is that of a marionette with a lot of threads attached to different parts, each of which are producing reactions and behavior manifestations. With the foolasnitamnian there is something that is holding it together and it is woven according to a purpose that goes beyond the present. For each one of us there is a pattern of life which is our destiny. In the realization of this we fulfill the reason for our existence here on earth. There is also the pattern of the day and the pattern of the hour. To see this requires a certain kind of awareness. The direct perception of our pattern belongs to conscience and the unconditioned side of our nature. The pattern is creative and created.

The confidence has to grow in us all that each of us has a pattern in our lives, each of us has a destiny, and all will go as it should if we can get close enough to it—to be fully in it is very much to hope for. For some of you, your lives were going against your true pattern before you came here. The feeling of tension this brought about was one of the factors that brought you here. You have felt the need to be able to do what is right for you. This is something that we can gradually work at and not just think and talk about. It can be brought into everything that we do whether it is something outward, like the cooking of a meal or something inward like the morning exercise. We are trying to get this pattern of the wholeness of our lives into our awareness.

If it were not for the pattern of events in human history, then man's disorganizing power would destroy the whole of life. Rare people can produce extraordinary events in the world because they are endowed with pattern awareness. By taking things within the scale of our own lives we can have a taste of this very special thing. Then our lives are not just the working out of the consequences of past causes, but have a creative feeling in them.

Student: I was able to compose music that fitted for the play. I don't know how it came about; it was one of those things that was there already. I wasn't even conscious at all of, "Oh my God, it is coming to me." It was sort of there. I think it was like an acceptance of some sort, but required a certain amount of opening. You can participate in something, but as long as you have preconceived ideas of what you are, it seems to leave you out. You have to accept yourself to fit into some kind of pattern.

JG Bennett: Right. I must say that I did notice the music and I was quite sure that it had been composed as you described. You never get things like that if you think them out. However much trouble you take, there is always something that doesn't fit.

There is a big element of trust in this. You see that there is something that you can trust, and if you trust it, it will go on and keep things right. One can do extraordinary things with the help of trust but if the trust wavers, one falls in.

I talked to some people, George and Helen Sandwith who studied the fire walkers in Fiji and elsewhere. The fire walkers said that you simply had to trust yourself to the fire. You can see that it is like that if you trust the fire then it will not burn you. I have seen the same thing with dervishes doing all sorts of incredible things like sticking skewers through themselves and slicing themselves up with knives. They would just wipe their hands over the wounds and you would see a great big gash healing up in front of your eyes. They talk of putting their trust in God. But what are they trusting in doing that? They are not trusting God to put his hand out of heaven and haul them off the fire. They are really trusting in the pattern of the event. But you can lose your nerve and the contact vanishes. In anything, once questions and thoughts come into your mind, it all goes to pieces.

Student: It seems that a pattern is all very colorless and intangible: something transparent that somehow holds all the potential within it. An illustration that comes to me is a musical scale, which is simply a set of relationships. Yet it somehow contains all of what is possible to play within that scale and has its own character. Also, a pattern is something which is almost intelligent, striving to be achieved.

JG Bennett: I think that what you are trying to say is that the pattern is not in this world—the pattern is not the manifestation. I was talking about the Unmanifested Sun in the cosmology class. This is the Sun in the unconditioned world. It is colorless because it is irrelevant to talk about it having color or not. But it is the holder of the pattern of the evolution of the whole solar system, which is a much bigger and more complex thing than even the evolution of life on the earth. The visible Sun is not just the entry of the material substances, but the realization of the pattern. But we do not see the pattern. It is the same with us—the pattern is in the unconditioned or unmanifested side of our nature but it is realized in the visible side. For the perfected man there is no gap between the two sides. One way of talking about our work is that this person with body, mind, and the rest of it should be entirely integrated with the invisible side. The work can be pictured as the integration of the unmanifested and manifested. That is where trust comes in. The manifest relies by its nature on the unmanifest, but it requires a special kind of decision for the manifest to throw away the props and allow itself to be directed by something it cannot see or understand until it begins to manifest. Then one can say, 'Well, that's what it's about; that's how it is."

Student: How do you know when a pattern is emerging, whether it is right to let it happen or try and change it? I really get lost in this.

JG Bennett: You know according to your own state. If you are in a subjective state you cannot have reliable indications because your state will perhaps even make you see white as black and black as white.

Therefore, when it appears that something is revealing itself, it is really important to set about getting oneself as completely as possible into an objective state. If you really wish to be able to make an impartial judgment about whether something is right or not, you must be prepared to devote a certain amount of time to it. It may take you an hour. You have to put the whole thing out of your mind and concern yourself only with your own state. Supposing I had to do that, I would go and make my ablutions, sit down and do an exercise. I would certainly find that I would be tending to think about the particular thing, but I would go on until I realized that I am calmed down and no longer thinking about it. Then I would start the exercise or do a zikr.\* When I know that I am free from subjective feelings, it usually happens that the whole thing shows itself quite clearly. I need not worry about self-will. One must not expect to be in the right place just because one wants to be; it does not come in that way. One has to be ready. People who work a great deal and regularly on themselves still need to prepare themselves to get into an objective state when they wish to make an impartial judgment.

Student: It seemed to me that I didn't know anything about pattern until something happened and then it appeared to be inevitable. It is so extraordinary that when something happens it is as if I knew it all the time. You once said that we must be very careful never to expect anything, because if we do, we put ourselves into a different time from the one the pattern is in. I couldn't understand it then, but now I'm beginning to see that the pattern must have to do with time. It is all in the same time really, if it is in that world. I can't work out patterns for my own life but I do think that after the event one can see something.

JG Bennett: If we are talking about pattern in the objective sense, then we don't see it because it is unmanifested. The pattern itself does not exist and therefore we cannot know it. But the pattern is that which gives existence the possibility of having the right form, being as it should be. Our task as human beings is to enable the two to fuse together so that what is happening in the manifested world really corresponds to what is happening in the unmanifested world.

In the Lord's Prayer it is said, 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Heaven stands for the unmanifested or unconditioned world and the earth stands for the manifested or conditioned world. If we represent the dharma as being the will of the Father, then when we say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we wish that the manifested and the unmanifested should be together.

If we could know the pattern, then it would already be manifested: and if it were manifested then it would be an imperfect pattern because in manifestation something has to be lost. Therefore, the more nearly you can come to allowing the pattern to work without premeditation, without expectation, the more nearly it can come to being just right. This appears a great deal in the Gospels: trust the pattern, take no thought for the morrow. You should trust the pattern which is not manifested, not the facts which are manifested—the facts will let you down.

There is a future which is knowable because the causes of it are already here. But if you start expecting something that does not belong to the causal future, something which has a free and creative quality, you can never find it and it will never happen. By expecting a particular result—or, indeed, by expecting anything—you prevent the freer qualities from entering you.